

FOR THE DEFENCE OF CANADA

I.

There is no serious suggestion among British people that Great Britain could have remained neutral in the Great War which broke across Europe three years ago and which still fills the earth with devastation and mourning. By British people one means not only those of English speech and British origin, but all of any race or tongue or creed who salute the flag, and enjoy the heritage of freedom which belongs to British citizenship. The mother country had an understanding with France which could not be ignored ; an obligation to Belgium which could not be repudiated without dishonor. In the conventions and understandings to which the British Empire was committed there was no menace to any other nation. The object was not to make war but to keep peace ; not to divide or convulse Europe but to assure international security and the honorable and happy independence of all peoples.

II.

It is true that the British navy was maintained in strength, vigor and efficiency, but the navy was not an instrument of aggression nor even the guardian of exclusive paths for British commerce across the seas. It was the bulwark of freedom ; the police force of all nations. The trade of the Empire had no other protection. The Empire itself had no other wall of defence. There was no British army to challenge other communities nor any thought of aggression or conquest. Indeed it is certain that the people of Great Britain and the Dominions could not be united in support of a war for territorial extension or a wanton attack upon the independence of any other country. There may be doubtful chapters in British history. There may have been ages when Great Britain was willing to live by the sword ; when her statesmen strove for dominion over other lands and peoples. But